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AN ADDRESS

IN MEMORY OF

THOMAS M. HOLT,

GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA, AND FOR TWELVE YEARS  
PRESIDENT OF THE NORTH CAROLINA  
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
RALEIGH, OCTOBER 27, 1898.

By C. B. DENSON,

At the request of President John S. Cunningham and the Executive  
Committee of the N. C. Agricultural Society.



RALEIGH, N. C.:  
ALFORD, BYNUM & CHRISTOPHERS, PRINTERS,  
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[From the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the North Carolina Agricultural Society, October 27th, 1898, Col. John S. Cunningham of Person, President, and Hon. John Nichols of Wake, Secretary.]

"At the conclusion of the address commemorative of the life and character of the late Governor Thomas M. Holt, the following resolution was offered by Maj. A. M. McPheeters, accompanied by appropriate remarks:

*"Resolved, That the thanks of the North Carolina Agricultural Society be given to Capt. C. B. Denson for his able, eloquent and truthful address on the life and character of the distinguished and beloved ex-President of this Society, the late Gov. Thos. M. Holt, who so long, faithfully and intelligently served our Society."*

"The resolution was seconded by Col. Julian S. Carr, who paid an eloquent tribute to the deceased statesman.

"In announcing the unanimous passage of the resolution, President Cunningham made touching references to the sacrifices and services in behalf of the Society of the honored dead, and accorded Gov. Holt a high position among the best beloved sons of North Carolina."

Gift

Claude B. Denson

1 F '08



## ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE NORTH CAROLINA  
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

*Ladies and Gentlemen* :—This spot is sacred with memories of great North Carolinians. Its very walls are vocal with the names of statesmen, jurists, soldiers—leaders all, the peerage of the mind and the heart.

I come to speak of one whose tones yet linger on the ear ; who sat here for many long years as the presiding officer of the State Agricultural Society, who ascended that Chair as the Speaker of the chosen representatives of the State, as he graced, indeed, a like position in the Senate Chamber of this Capitol, and whose words of counsel were read from this stand, while Governor of the Commonwealth.

Amid the illustrious shades that encircle us, on this, the crowning night of the State Fair, whose unseen presence so dominates our hearts, as his whose service to his people, we commemorate in this hour?

Time and space are needed for the complete recognition of great souls, no less than of objects and events. As yet, we are too near the dead. Distance reveals the relation of the mountain to the landscape.

Every year of his life displayed new strength and greater possibilities in the typical Carolinian whose career we consider. In steady evolution, his character came to its consummate development through a chain of events absolutely Providential. It will remain for another generation, perhaps, to reach the crown and flower of his efforts for the welfare of his beloved State.

Well has a philosopher said, "Character is of a stellar and undiminishable greatness."

What the subject of this slight tribute may have said, or may have done, is merely the index to what he was. "Character is nature in the highest form," we are told. The study of this hour is the building of character as shown in the life of one of the greatest of North Carolina's sons.

THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT was born on the sacred field of the struggle of Alamance (at that time a part of Orange County), July 15th, 1831, and was the second son of Edwin M. Holt and Emily Banks Holt. His grandfather was Michael Holt, of Haw fields, who was one of the first legislators to insist upon internal improvement for the advancement of the people. There is high authority for the statement that the family descends from that of the famous jurist of the name in English annals.

E. M. Holt had ten children—seven sons and three daughters; all of whom became interested in cotton manufactures, and, with their children and connections, form to day the most eminent group of cotton manufacturers in North Carolina. He was born in 1807, in Orange, and beginning with seven slaves as a farmer, owned seventy at the opening of the war. He added also a country store on his farm, and a grist mill on Alamance Creek.

The operations of a small steam cotton mill at Greensboro attracted his notice, and in 1832 he built a mill, for water power, on Alamance Creek, obtaining the machinery from Paterson, N. J. At first, in his simple frame building, with 1200 spindles, he spun only bunch yarns, sent out in wagons to the country stores. Then he made cloth, and about 1850, began to manufacture the Alamance Plaids, which from that day, became familiar to the commercial world. The old factory was burned in 1871, but was immediately rebuilt. These were the first plaid looms brought south of the Potomac.

He died in 1884, having lived to see the enormous expansion of his work in the hands of his children and others. To-day North Carolina has more mills and more spindles than any Southern State.

Of him, an eminent man declared, "The man who creates something is, after all, the benefactor of his people."

Thomas M. Holt laid the foundation of his strong health, and developed his manly frame, in manual labor upon the farm. He acquired industrious habits and vigor of muscle and quickness of eye, at the plow itself, and in the wheat field he loved to reap and bind. Men of his race love the soil, and its conquest by the might of their strong arms.

Those early lessons were never forgotten. They antedated all other experiences. He was a farmer born, and to return to the fields and the lowing kine was his recreation.

As soon as the disturbances of war were over, and his prosperity in manufactures gave him means to employ his energies in farming, he bought Linwood, on the Yadkin, in Davidson County (in 1866). Here he conducted one of the most admirable farms in the country, having at times a thousand acres of wheat or of clover, and exhibited stock, and implements the best to be obtained, and husbandry of a model character. Yet it was not for show. It was a paying investment, besides gratifying his early tastes. On a single occasion, he sent more than a score of Devon calves to the Fair, to be distributed as premiums thereafter, and as gifts to those who were seeking to improve agriculture.

At one time he issued the unique advertisement of several hundred tons of fine clover hay, and several hundred bushels of clover seed harvested at Linwood, never offered on such a scale by any farmer in our State before. This circumstance was the basis of an interesting manuscript found among the papers of the late Hon. Paul Cameron, of Orange, himself an agriculturist of high distinction.

From his father's farm, after preparation at home, he became the pupil of Dr. Alex. Wilson, the eminent Presbyterian divine in charge of Caldwell Institute, then in Hillsboro. He was fortunate in a preceptor, whose pupils took rank among the first in the State. The young student entered the Sophomore class of the University, in June, 1849, and found himself with such gifted associates as Richard H. Battle, Thos. C. Fuller, and A. M. Waddell, who yet survive, and Z. B. Vance, W. C. Kerr and Thomas Settle, who have played their great part, and passed away.

From the first, the wish of the father coincided with his own tastes—that he should give his life to mercantile and manufacturing pursuits, rather than to the learned professions. Before the completion of the college course, therefore, he was sent to Philadelphia to learn the wholesale dry goods business, and there

he mastered commercial details and forms of great value to him throughout life.

The partnership between E. M. Holt and his brother-in-law, William A. Carrigan, in the Alamance Mills, lasted fourteen years; when, in order to be with his sons, who had moved to Arkansas, Mr. Carrigan sold his interest to Mr. Holt. Thomas was now recalled from Philadelphia, and for ten years worked for and with his father as a partner.

His farming life and his collegiate and commercial courses were the prelude to severe and effective work as a mechanic. He must know and handle everything for himself. Long years after, when walking with your speaker in his spacious grounds at Haw River, he pointed across the stream to the factory, and said, "I always determined to know my business thoroughly. There is nothing there that I have not done with my own hands. I have been at the dye-tub and the gin, and have worked from the foundation to the roof. If need be, there is no portion of the machinery that I cannot take to pieces and repair, and no man's task which I cannot do myself. Too much will not be required of any one, but it takes faithful work for honest goods, and that I must have. I am proud that my father trained me to work."

In 1853, a wandering Frenchman, an expert dyer, taught the art to the young manufacturer, with an eighty-gallon copper boiler and an iron pot; and for eight years he worked in the dye tubs after the dye house was built. Four box looms were put in, and his language of after years was justified: "I am entitled to the honor of having dyed with my own hands, and had woven under my own supervision the first yard of colored cotton goods manufactured in the South. My father trained all his sons in the manufacturing business, and as we grew up, we branched out for ourselves and built other mills, but the plaid business began in the little mill on the banks of Alamance Creek."

In 1854, the North Carolina Railroad was built across Haw River, and four years after the factory known as the Granite Mills was bought. It had but 528 spindles, but was gradually extended and improved. The war came, goods from the outside



world were cut off by armed lines and a relentless blockade. Clothing for the army and the people was an imperious necessity.

In 1862, the father sold his interest in the Granite Mills to the son, and now increased to 1,000 spindles, they ran day and night throughout the war. Ten days after Appomattox, Colonel Holt began the making of brick, to add to the mill, and he was the first man from the South to go North for new machinery. In the Spring of 1866, he was fairly at work again, this time with 1,152 spindles.

And now industry and skill and integrity had made their mark. Steadily his great enterprise grew and prospered. A town rose about him, chiefly of the homes of his own tenants, to which in later years, he added churches for the Methodists and Baptists, chiefly built by his benefactions. As hard working as the humblest, he was kind and considerate to the weak, while inflexibly demanding faithful work from all who were able.

And so, in 1871, the Granite Flour Mills, all the water power, and a large area of adjacent land were added, and eventually the roller process introduced into the flour mills. In 1871, came the looms for sheetings and plaids, cheviots, etc., and by a steady and constant progress, advancement proceeded until in the mills at Haw River 13,000 spindles, and many hundred looms were making plaids, cheviots, cottonades, suitings and sheetings, and they go to the ends of the earth, with the demand always increasing.

But in the earlier days there were times that required iron resolution. At one period there was a long depression and a falling market. Goods were made at a loss and piled up without buyers, until a vast amount of capital had been absorbed, and temporary stoppage seemed the only resource. But that meant suffering to some, destitution to others. Calling his faithful operatives together, the intrepid master told them the truth, and offered to continue, if they willed, with half wages paid, and the other half to be credited to them and paid when the goods could be sold. They joyfully acceded—relief came in due time, all were paid to the uttermost, and good sense and mutual confidence prevented loss and distress, and knit anew the strong bonds of regard between the employer and employed.

No such thing as a strike ever occurred there. His knowledge, his skill and industry won their respect; his justice and fidelity, their regard; his sympathy and generosity, their love and reverence. To them he became not so much the master, as the father.

How large an element in the prosperity of this Commonwealth the manufacture of cotton is destined to become, it would be rash to predict; but already, with such a leader, there are fourteen mills controlled by the Holt family and connections; there are twenty-two mills in the County of Alamance alone, and no less than 224 daily adding to the wealth of North Carolina.

The growing influence of the farmer of Linwood, and manufacturer of Haw River, was felt in the State, and when the expansion of the Fair at Raleigh was determined upon in 1872, Colonel Holt was chosen as its President, and another revelation of the power within him was displayed. The occasion, perhaps, will justify some reference to an institution which occupies so large a place in our contemporaneous annals.

When the history of the development of North Carolina in the latter half of the nineteenth century shall be written, it will be found that the work of the North Carolina Agricultural Society was one of its greatest factors.

The annual Fair at Raleigh was the great State holiday, and much more than that. There has nothing been in the year like the prolonged harvest home of the Fair Week for the general coming together of North Carolinians, and the taking counsel and encouragement for another year's advancement.

It was much more than a holiday. It was a great market and a great school. The outside world came to see what could be produced here, and what manner of people we were.

Likewise, in turn, they brought their fine breeds of stock, their improved machinery and appliances in every branch of agricultural industry; new seeds, tools, implements and methods were examined and discussed.

The nightly meetings at the Capitol knit anew old friendships, and attracted the progressive spirits of the country. Plans and policies were proposed that ripened into substantial blessings.

The Fair was the gateway through which immigration entered the State. It was an unparalleled advertisement of the good things in modern life, from a steam engine or a wind mill, to an embroidered handkerchief or a sewing needle. It brought together schools and colleges in friendly rivalry. It arrayed the whole State Guard together in encampment for the first time and made them feel the strength of union.

From its membership, its committees, agitation and ceaseless labor, came the whole Agricultural Department, the State Museum, North Carolina Experiment Station (largely through President Kemp P. Battle), and as a later outcome of the same, the Agricultural and Mechanical College. To its existence may be ascribed the exhibits by the State at the Expositions of Boston, Atlanta, New Orleans and at the World's Fairs at Vienna and Chicago, preparing the way for the development awaiting us in the future.

Through its committees, after inspection, it favored the stock law of Mecklenburg for sections suited thereto, and condemned the introduction of European grapes at Ridgeway. To one of its members, the late Professor Kerr, is due the suggestion to save the grapes in Europe by grafting upon American varieties, which has preserved an immense industry to the world.

The far reaching influence of the Society upon the State is a theme well worthy of the historian's analysis. Many valuable organizations have grown out of its meetings—historical and horticultural societies, dairymen's associations, and the like.

So, likewise, did it lead to a great State Exposition (under our distinguished townsman, Wm. S. Primrose), and lend its co-operation to the celebration of the Centennial of the Capital City.

It has been the meeting place of the battle-scarred veterans of the Civil War, and it opened its hospitable gates to the soldier boys of the Fifth Maryland and others of sister States not less than our own.

It is impossible to write the record of the generation since the war between the States without noting the strong and steady influence of the State Fair. It has been an honor to North Carolina, a great means of popular enlightenment and recreation, and a fountain of improving social agencies.

The State Agricultural Society was organized in the early fifties, such men as Kemp P. Battle of Raleigh, Dancy of Edgecombe, R. H. Smith of Halifax, and similar influential citizens at its head. The early Fairs were held in the eastern part of the city, the grounds being small and the accommodations resembling those of the County Fairs.

After the interruption of the war, followed by military occupation, and paralysis of effort for the time being, about 1869 the Fair was again doing its work, under the Presidency of Hon. Kemp P. Battle. With its progress larger grounds and better railroad connections were needed, and in 1872 Col. Thomas M. Holt, who had long been one of its firmest supporters, was called to the helm as President.

He was appealed to to guide a movement involving much money and credit. In the summer of 1873 the work was actively pushed on the new grounds in the northwest, near the city, track laid out and buildings begun. At the critical moment, when the track proved unexpectedly expensive, and delays had occurred in finishing the structures, exposed to the weather, the Black Friday of September, 1873, took place, ushering in the most terrible panic and business depression ever known. Everywhere enterprise was paralysed, credit gone, and confidence destroyed.

But Colonel Holt stood firm, and certain members of the Executive Committee joined him in giving their credit to secure from the banks and private sources means to put buildings and grounds in condition to hold the Thirteenth Annual Fair, and to pay certain pressing claims inherited for years. Shortness of time compelled high prices at the currency rates existing, and the whole had to be courageously met.

That this great institution continued to exist, and was held intact through long years thereafter of profound depression and of complete wreck of similar Fairs elsewhere, is due to the lion-hearted President, and to the men who stood with him and pledged their credit, redeeming it eventually with the money, share by share. The principal of this has never been repaid to the present day.

President Holt, at one time, did not hesitate to draw his check for five thousand dollars to keep the premium list paid up and for other liabilities. This was subsequently returned except about one thousand dollars. On another occasion, when the State Guard was here, without provision at that time by the State for the encampment or their support, he paid large bills for quarters and supplies, trusting to the future of the Fair for reimbursement.

Urged by his faithful friends of the Executive Committee, he stood at his post for twelve years, and the remembrance that they had preserved to the people one of their most cherished and valued institutions was the only reward of self-sacrifice and devotion to the public good.

Receiving no pecuniary return, he declined even the privilege of complimentary tickets for his personal friends, yet he advanced freely from his private means in every time of financial depression, and every year the necessary funds for contingent expenses, until he could be reimbursed after the Fair.

And faithfully he upheld this burden four times as long as any other man, and against the wish of personal friends, who saw his sacrifices of time and labor, in the midst of the greatest responsibilities at home, until the day came when he could no longer refuse to consider other interests, and hoped that the future of the Fair was secure to the people of North Carolina.

He knew and declared that the permanent welfare of this people depended upon successful industries, upon improved agriculture and progressive manufactures. He believed with his whole heart that the State Fair was the greatest object lesson to them that had been devised.

Few, perhaps, realize what care and responsibility rest upon the presiding officer of this great institution. It is like the conduct of a government by voluntary and unpaid officers. Receiving no salary or allowances of any description, he must, from patriotic love of his State and people, exert every energy of mind and body and use every influence to reconcile opposing interests and win cordial co-operation. From its peculiar circumstances, he must meet all contingencies, and draw freely upon his credit,

and, I may add, upon his private means, as most or all of them have done, including the present occupant of that honored position.

It is an imperishable honor to North Carolina that such good and true men have nobly borne this responsibility since Colonel Holt, as Wm. G. Upchurch, Richard H. Battle, Julian S. Carr, Benehan Cameron, and now the chivalrous gentleman, the prince of tobacco farmers and devoted friend of President Holt, John S. Cunningham, who presides over its destinies to-day.

The people make no mistake when they honor each and all of these as great leaders in the front ranks of the creators of wealth, the farmers and manufacturers. But, in a distinctive sense, the Fair remains as a monument of the indomitable will, the devoted perseverance, and the ardent State pride of Thomas M. Holt.

Recognizing his capacity for business, and confiding in his practical wisdom, he was elected a director of the North Carolina Railroad Company in 1869 by the stockholders, and was connected with it through life. He was President one year during the administration of Governor Caldwell, and when Major William A. Smith resigned the Presidency, during Governor Brogden's term, to enter Congress, he was again chosen President, and that by a Board of opposite political opinions. This he held for a score of years, witnessing the gradual and steady increase of its value.

In this capacity it was given to him to perform a great service to the people of North Carolina. At the time of the compromise of the State debt, part of which was a lien on the State's stock in the North Carolina Railroad, the whole matter was in the hands of the receiver of the Federal Court. Few in that hour believed that the property of the State could be saved. Those millions, indeed, were regarded as lost, like all other wrecks of the war.

But at the critical moment Colonel Holt associated with him some other leading business men of influence and patriotism, and voluntarily journeyed to the North to appeal to the men who held the bonds secured by this lien, and convince them of their and our interests. After much effort, and even a breaking off of all nego-



tiations at one time, his struggle was successful. A compromise was effected, and three-fourths of the stock of the road was preserved as the property of the people of North Carolina. It was the act of a man of business and a patriot. Political position he did not desire; he had never sought or held office. But the annual tribute to the State Treasury forever will be a monument to those good men and true that will outlive the stones of this Capitol.

His people demanded his services as a magistrate, a member of the old County Court, before the war, and as Chairman of the County Finance Committee, and they remembered his fidelity to duty. So, in 1872, when the County was in debt, her institutions languishing, and credit gone, he suffered himself to be chosen as a Commissioner. At the first meeting, the overseer of the poor reported the roofs leaking and shingles rotted, and no supplies for food and clothing, or credit. Commissioner Holt gave him an order for lumber, and instructions to drive to his store and get the supplies for which the poor were suffering.

Four years after there was a general demand that he should sacrifice his wishes, leave his great business interests, and go to the Senate of 1876. Politics as a game did not attract him. What could it give? Money was rapidly accumulating, occupation was interesting and absorbing, influence wide spread with men of all party views was already his. A small mind fixed upon the pecuniary loss, by absence from business, might have refused; a selfish man, from love of ease and control; a timid man, from dread of the struggle for the best things.

It is fashionable to ascribe dishonesty to all politicians. Some deny that any leader in politics can be thoroughly honest; can be a truly good man before his fellows and his Maker.

Not so have pronounced the great minds in all ages. Pythagoras declared, "Men should know that, in this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and spirits to be lookers on."

Diogenes said, "*Sustine non abstinence*"; that is, bear the burden, do not flee from it.

Lord Bacon, in his sonorous prose, affirms, "A contemplative life which does not cast any beam of heat or light upon human

society, is not known to Divinity ; and the necessity of advancing the public good censures that philosophy which flies from perturbations."

Milton, though warned by his physician, gave up the sight of his only remaining eye to perform the duty essential, as he deemed it, to the safety of the liberties of the people.

So, may we not say of Vance, dying at his post after the sacrifice of an eye, like his exemplar ?

If "Men of character," as a writer says, "are the conscience of society," sad will be the condition of that community that shall be deprived of their leadership from blind prejudice.

Colonel Holt appeared as a candidate for the Senate, and was charged with having, as Commissioner, delivered large supplies to the poor-house (now the Home), at great profits. The wagons had been seen at his store receiving the goods. The reply was characteristic. Calling the County Treasurer to the stand, Colonel Holt asked, if in the four years past, any bill had ever been presented for those supplies, and when the answer came in the negative, the magnanimous speaker apologized for the necessity that had wrung from him the public avowal of a charity buried until that day in his own generous breast.

He received 650 more votes than any man had ever polled in the County for any office whatever, and it is honorable to that people to say that he was elected as a patriot, by men of all opinions—a friend and a leader, and not a partisan. One of the wise sayings of Emerson is, that "The people know that they need in a leader not only talent, but the power to make the talent trusted."

It is worthy of note, that his name outran all others upon the the ticket with which it was associated, as long as he lived, both at home and abroad, as on the State ticket.

In 1882, 1884 and 1886, he went to the House of Representatives, being chosen to the Speakership in 1884. A discriminating writer of the day said of his service :

"Of experience in both branches of the Legislature, a good parliamentarian through conduct of public affairs ; full of energy, life and vim, quick in thought and action, of strictest honor and integrity ;



earnest, faithful and conscientious in the discharge of his duty ; direct, straight-forward, firm and manly ; just, fair and impartial ; not enticed by allurements from the plain path of duty, nor deterred therefrom by opposition ; broad-minded and level-headed, the duties of his exalted office were administered with ability, and in a business like manner, to the entire satisfaction of his fellow-members of both political parties, and to the people of the State."

Among the measures in which he took an active part were the steps for the building of the Western North Carolina Railroad, and the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley, which some of his constituents had mistakenly opposed. He was in the forefront in the founding of the Department of Agriculture, which almost introduced a new era by the control of the quality of fertilizers sold to our farmers by millions. A member of its first Board and Chairman of its Finance Committee, he gave strong support to Professor Kerr, to whose constructive genius was really due the organization of that Department, for which others reaped the credit.

Colonel Holt was a friend to education in every form. He voted always for liberal appropriations for public schools, and for the University.

His services, in the adjustment of the State debt, have been referred to.

He was always ready to defend the interests, and extend the operations of all the Asylums and Hospitals for the afflicted, the insane and the deaf and dumb, the blind, the disabled, and the orphan, carrying into his public life a firm conviction of the duty of the strong to provide for the weak.

From year to year, there was a new unfolding of the native powers, disciplined by the five-fold training of the farm, the college, the workshop, the counting-room, and the halls of State. Many said he would be useful on committees from his practical knowledge. But they were surprised to see him hold his own in debate with the experienced and ingenious masters of speech. Often he put the most brilliant to rout. He used plain language, to the point. He was candid, sometimes confounding his friends with honest admissions of any weak points in his case. He was

ready to accept any improvement that was genuine. He scorned a specious show. He overwhelmed at last with the simple truth, fresh from an honest heart. Rectitude of purpose shone like the sunlight through his every act.

The people were swift to perceive that he gloried in being one of them, typical North Carolinian that he was. They saw that for them he had the triple friendship of the heart to feel for their needs, the head to plan the relief, and the hand to execute the mission.

Men who admired his energy in private life, but doubted his mastery of public affairs, found themselves insensibly seeking his unerring judgment, and following his leadership.

What was his secret? He knew to whom he spoke, for he was of the people, and he knew thoroughly what he spoke. Success lay in character, that "reserved force which acts directly by presence and without means." Not without the power to speak and to write, it was when he laid aside the careful manuscript, and returned to the plain, blunt words of the loom or the plow, and looked the incarnation of truth, and manliness and courage, that the effect was most lasting and profound.

"Man," a philosopher says, "is sometimes the expression of the same laws that govern the tides and the sun."

Elected in 1888, as Lieutenant Governor, he returned to the Senate as its presiding officer, in the sessions of 1889 and 1891, but was unexpectedly called to the Executive Chair by the sudden death of his distinguished colleague Daniel G. Fowle, April 8th, 1891.

Summoned from his business cares to assume the delicate and multifarious duties of the Governorship, he applied himself with accustomed fidelity to the task. His early habits made him the first comer to the official desk in the morning. He sought to know everything that might assist him in his duties. He was approachable by the humblest. If ever a man lived who loved North Carolina with his whole heart, and studied the well-being of the people as the object of his life, that man was Thomas M. Holt.

Says the Rev. Dr. McCorkle, his pastor and friend :

" When, in the maturity of his powers, he was providentially called to take the Chair of State made vacant by the death of the gifted and lamented Governor Fowle, he brought to that high office a capacity for mastering details, a painstaking patience, a practical wisdom, a faultless devotion to principle, and a wealth of useful knowledge, that made him eminently fit for the place."

As his administration proceeded, respect deepened into admiration, and the regret at its termination was not confined to the members of his own political party. With wonderful unity the press had recognized his stature as a statesman.

Said the Fayetteville *Observer* (E. J. Hale), referring to his message to the Legislature :

" Nothing can be of greater importance now to the people of North Carolina than the study of their own affairs. This the remarkable message of that remarkable man, who is about to retire for a season from the headship of the State, will enable them to make.

" We call Governor Holt a remarkable man, and we do so with deliberation. He is a very able man, and North Carolina has rarely enjoyed his equal in the gubernatorial office. Take him all in all, the verdict of history will be that he comes next to Vance.

" Governor Holt writes good English, and he says what he has to say in the fewest words. This is the highest order of writing, and when so written, if the subjects be important to the people, and the attitude of the writer wisely taken, then the paper of one in Governor Holt's position becomes statesmanlike. Lastly, if we find that all of his state papers have been of this character, recording or presaging the wise acts of a sensible, patriotic and courageous man, we must call the author a statesman. By this test Governor Holt easily takes rank as a statesman. We entirely mistake the people of North Carolina if they do not require many years more of public service from this North Carolinian of North Carolinians."

The *State Chronicle* (Thos. R. Jernigan) used this language :

" The administration of Governor Holt has been comparatively short, but he will leave the Executive chair with the reputation of one of the best Governors that North Carolina has ever had. No Chief Magistrate of this Commonwealth has ever vacated the office whose acts have been more generally approved and commended by the people of the whole State than have the acts of Thomas M. Holt.

"The Governor has grown every day in the confidence of the people, and his reputation is not only now coequal with the State but is also national.

"During his administration questions as difficult and important as ever engrossed the attention of any Governor have been thrust upon him, and were promptly and ably decided. Noteworthy are the various railroad matters and questions of taxation, fully explained in his message. Governor Holt pushed these, and their solution, by which the State has been and will be further benefited, is in great part due to the clear and discriminating judgment of her Chief Executive officer.

"So far as the State of North Carolina is concerned, the fame of Governor Holt is complete. There is not a citizen of the Commonwealth, whose opinion is worthy of consideration, who will not sincerely regret the day when he resumes his place as a private citizen."

All sections echoed the same voice. The *Southport Leader* declared :

"With the same absence of a pretentious personality with which he took his seat as Governor nearly two years ago, Thomas M. Holt last week stepped from the Chief Executive office of the State.

"He has made a most admirable record, in every particular commanding the respect of all the people of the State, irrespective of party. For his untiring zeal and devotion, with regret will the people see Mr. Holt leave the office which he has so creditably filled, yet all must feel a pride and satisfaction that North Carolina has a man of such character who, in public and private life, has so faithfully executed his duties and obligations."

The *High Point Enterprise* delivered this judgment :

"Thomas M. Holt, in many respects, was the greatest Governor North Carolina has had since the war. Broad and liberal in his views, and possessing peculiar executive ability, he never had to inquire into the wishes of those who represented certain sentiments when a public question confronted him. He was too big to fear responsibility and too cosmopolitan to become a bigot."

The *Asheboro Courier* said of him :

"He came to be recognized as the equal of any of the State's great sons in the domain of statesmanship. He retired from office with the respect and good will of the people of all parties, and returned to his private business with added honors and hosts of new friends."

A writer in the *Atlanta Journal* remarks :

"His administration was one of the purest and bravest in the his-

tory of North Carolina State government. His only message to the Legislature is regarded as in many respects the ablest public document ever read before that body."

One more of the admiring comments that would fill volumes may be cited. Said one of the leading editors of the State:

"It is neither compliment nor adulation to say that in becoming a private citizen he loses not one whit of the esteem that he commanded as Governor. Less than two years ago he entered the Executive office, but in this brief period he has commanded the admiration and confidence of our people to a degree surpassed by no other Governor in this generation, with the possible exception of Vance.

"No other Governor that the State ever had has combined in himself in as high a degree so many of the excellent qualities that distinguish our people. His conduct of public business has been essentially what it would have been had it been possible for the State collectively to manage its own affairs.

"His speeches are marked by clearness, earnestness, breadth of thought and courageous honesty of conviction upon public matters agitating the people. No man ever faced issue more boldly or with less regard for self.

"In handling public questions, whether State or National, he has shown a rare combination of practical wisdom, of political knowledge and of strong intellectual power.

"He has shown a sympathy with the needs of our people. His recent message to the Legislature has never been surpassed in North Carolina for clearness, for comprehensiveness, and for statesmanlike appreciation of the requirements of a great and rapidly growing Commonwealth. It may well serve as a guide-post for this generation.

"The social duties of his office were performed with modesty, quiet dignity and hospitality.

"Thomas M. Holt and his administration may well be treasured by North Carolina as typical of her best virtues."

He was urged, on various occasions, to address his fellow-citizens, and with all his cares, found time to counsel and encourage, especially at the Fairs, as at Poplar Tent and Newbern, and in behalf of education at Davidson and the University. His aim was to inspire and uplift.

In an address at the State Fair, he welcomed the Mechanical Parade in these words:

"I must remind you of the intimate need, the farmer and manufacturer have, each for the other; being both, I know them. They are

the right and left wings of the same army. They are the Siamese twins of industry. The farmer requires a consumer of his products, and the best consumer is the mechanic at his door.

"The true interests of the farmer and manufacturer are, and ever must be, identical. Who harms one, inflicts a blow upon the other, and is the common enemy of both.

"A people altogether agricultural are invariably poor. Political economy indicates this, and human history demonstrates it, beyond a doubt. Wealth is the reward of skill. While it is not the chief good of men or of nations, yet it is the means, in this age, of enormous influence for good.

"North Carolina as she may be, with her plains and hills dotted with manufacturing towns, and her half hundred of minerals fashioned into princely contributions to the commerce of the world, her valleys teeming with a thrifty population, and coffers bursting with riches, think you not that the majesty of power, at that day, will hang upon the tongues of her statesmen in the national councils?

"God has given us almost boundless resources. We have but to use intelligently and perseveringly what lies about us ready for our grasp."

Four years after, in 1891, he talks to his Linwood neighbors, at the Cabarrus Fair, in the same cheering strain:

"We have it in our hands to be the most independent people, and the richest in every element of happiness, on the globe. Let us use self-restraint in our eager grasp at a money crop. Encourage every form of home industry. Let this reach every detail of life.

"Believe and act upon the truth, that right here God has blessed us with the gifts of as goodly a land as the heavens look down upon. Take heart and rejoice that we have the intelligence and the industry to win success. If there are obstacles in the way, we shall move them, too.

"The tide is turning. In spite of the tariff and the pension roll, the percentage of real and personal property gained in the last decade by the South, is shown by the census of 1890, to exceed the average of the Union. Keep step to the march of North Carolina. We can not all think alike, but at least let us credit each other with honesty of purpose and patriotism of heart in all that affects the welfare of our grand old State.

"You are a God-fearing people. Your churches of Poplar Tent, Rock River and others reach beyond Revolutionary days. I invoke the calm conservative sentiment of such a people, to 'Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good.' I have spoken to you in all plainness and sincerity, and would have you feel that in your Governor you have a friend to every true citizen.

"May we all live to see plenty and peace at every honest fireside."



Never was there a man more free from affectation or pride. He cast aside all props and advantages from his great wealth, won by his own arm and brain, and was independent of the trappings of place. He would be known for himself alone. Pursued by the mutterings of envy, and the false accusation that he was too rich to regard the people, he did not reply with platitudes upon the dignity of labor, uttered at a safe distance from the grime and smoke of toil, but in simple, strong words at Newbern, he said: "My heart is with the man who labors for his daily bread, and his little ones. I know what it is to work. For years these arms have plunged into the dye-tub to the shoulder."

As by an electric spark, the gathering affections of the people were welded to the kingly soul greater than the purple of office, grander than a Cæsar on his throne.

The physical penalty of labor of mind and body fell upon him, and all his later years were shadowed by suffering from a malady which he met with fortitude, and struggled to overcome as long as hope was possible.

To the apprehension of his family and his most intimate friends he undertook, as an invalid, labors from which strong men would shrink.

At this time, retired from office, one of the episodes of his life which gave him keen satisfaction, was his gift of the monument on the Battle Grounds of Guilford, to the memory of the North Carolina Troops, who on March 15th, 1781, fought the Hessians and Tarleton's cavalry, after the Continental Line had retreated from the field of battle.

On the occasion of the celebration, Governor Holt disclaimed any intention to deliver a speech, but simply said :

"If there be any people on American soil entitled to celebrate the Fourth of July, it is the people of Alamance and Guilford Counties. I was taught in my school days that the Revolution began at Concord and ended at Yorktown, not a word of which was true. It began at Alamance, and ended practically at Guilford Court House."

Judge Schenck thanked the donor for his great-heartedness in building that monument where the North Carolina riflemen made

their stand all alone, and declared that the desire of his heart had been accomplished.

From the lamented Judge Robert P. Dick, came an addressee, which he was too ill to deliver in person, in which he said :

" We delight to honor Governor Thomas M. Holt, who with munificent liberality has erected this costly and appropriate monument, soon to be unveiled before us by the hands of lovely girls; representatives of youth, beauty, purity, truth, patriotism and honor. His wise, just, impartial and beneficent administration of the office of Chief Executive of our State, will have an eminent place in our civil and political annals, but his name, inscribed on this monument as donor, will ever be his highest honor, as it will associate him for all time with the heroic men and deeds that conferred immortal glory on the Battle of Guilford Court House."

This was the expression of a political opponent in high judicial station, and the hand that penned these lines has itself been folded in its last rest.

Two years later, he added the superb stature of Major Joseph Winston, crowning the monument erected to his men. At the first view of this work of art, the Greensboro *Record* declared :

" With spontaneous feelings of gratitude and reverence, the name of Holt came upon every lip. How happy must be the man who had means and magnanimity enough to erect this great tribute to the memory of the heroes who laid deep and strong the foundations of the mightiest government upon earth!

"The name of THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT will grow in lustre, and invoke the reverence of posterity. His example will be commended to ambitious and enlightened youth, as the noblest type of manhood. May God bless him and inspire many to imitate his virtues!"

At the unveiling of the statue, Dr. Winston said :

" On the 27th February, 1775, Josep Winston, with the Surry Riflemen, at Moore's Creek, gained the first battle of the Revolution fought upon Southern soil. Six years later, on the 16th March, 1781, on yonder hill, Joseph Winston, with the Surry Riflemen, made the last charge upon the British columns, in a battle that practically ended the American Revolution. His noble statue stands upon the spot. A loyal heart has put it there. Long may the patriotic donor live to enrich his State with sterling virtues, and with patriotic munificence bless his people and perpetuate his memory!"



Of this, the poet said :

“ Dead is that soul that does not flame,  
At sight of Guilford's deathless name,  
And her three children's—heirs of fame,  
By Alamance's child  
Graven on that fair memorial to their deed up-piled.

They live who die the world to bless,  
Though never their sod a footstep press.  
As they sink in forgetfulness  
Out on the world's dark verge,  
Oblivion's ocean-moan their only funeral dirge.

And they still live ! when that proud stone  
Is by the battering years o'erthrown,  
And, mingled with their dust, is blown  
Round earth's unpeopled shore,  
Then they shall live, and on and on, forever more.”

Already with these kind wishes and prophecies of future happiness and greater triumphs sounding in his ears, he knew that the grasp of mortal disease was upon him. Strengthened to endure by his faithful physician and son-in-law, and by his annual rest at Buffalo Springs, with friends that he loved, conspicuous among whom was President Cunningham, he yet recognized the coming of the inevitable, with the philosophy of a Socrates, or rather, with the sublime faith of the Christian.

When he came to pay his tribute to the Confederate dead, on that great day for our State, when her fair women unveiled yonder monumental pile, what he had suffered was written upon his face, and the hearts of his friends sank within them.

He had rendered distinguished services to education, not only in the General Assembly, but as a trustee of Davidson College and of the University ; by his contributions and his addresses ; and the last of his public honors in life was the conferring upon him of the degree of LL.D. by the University.

But his deep appreciation of higher education was best shown by his aid to the struggling student, unknown to the world. Circumstances once forced upon the knowledge of your speaker, then in educational life, the fact that Governor Holt kept an

annual fund, taken from the means with which Providence blessed his labors, and devoted it to the help of talented young men, shut out by poverty from higher education and greater service to society. Revealed in the confidence of the friendship of years, this secret of his inner life was not for the applause of men, and was not to be made known, but now its memory is part of the priceless legacy of his example.

In 1855 Governor Holt married Louisa, daughter of Samuel and Mary A. B. Moore, and their children were Charles T. Holt, Cora M., who married Dr. E. C. Laird, Daisy M., who became the wife of Alfred W. Haywood, Esq., Ella N., who married Charles Bruce Wright, Esq., and Thomas M. Holt, Jr., whose untimely death has broken the circle.

In the bosom of such a family as this was his greatest happiness, and when the shadows of illness and deep physical depression thickened about him, he turned to the loving tenderness of that home.

For forty years he bore an almost romantic affection for the wife of his youth, sharing her refined tastes, and eager to anticipate her every wish. Never perhaps were bonds of devotion stronger than those of the father and his children, repeating in that generation the filial love for his own parents. Many a time he recounted to your speaker the lessons of his early days. Indeed, his last disappointment was his inability to see the venerable mother who survived him. His brothers found him worthy of the name, in all that sacred word implies.

More than a quarter of a century ago, when the assembled Press Association of North Carolina were his guests at Haw River, it fell to your speaker, one of the least of them, to reply to his cordial welcome, and hail the coming future in cotton manufacture, under the lead of a Napoleon of industry. The prediction has been signally verified, but most of the guests, like Engelhard and Woodson, Pritchard and Stamps, and their compeers have departed, and now their host also.

Thrown into intimate business relations for five years, and honored with his friendship and correspondence for more than five times that number, it was especially sad to see in the letters

of the last months of his life, how the depression of continued suffering had racked his mind with anxiety, not for himself, or so much for those for whom he had provided so well, but for the well being of the people, the welfare of the State.

Yet the star of Christian hope in a better world shone with unclouded brilliancy. He had been a ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church more than thirty years, loved the worship of God, made the Scriptures the book of his heart, preserved the family altar. His was the religion that keepeth itself unspotted from the world, and visiteth the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. This is holy ground and we may not dwell upon it.

After patient submission to grievous suffering, the end came with a brief attack of pneumonia. In the darkness, he fixed the eye of faith upon a Heavenly Father, and resigned his beloved ones, assured of a wiser and more loving guardian for them than the best of earth.

It was on Saturday evening, April 11th, 1896.

His venerated pastor said, "For himself he expressed no doubt or fear, but he was anxious for the future of his country, for the happiness of the many dependent upon him, and the prosperity of his beloved State. At the last he gathered about him the children of his love, and gave them to know that he was not afraid to die. And with more suffering, the veil of unconsciousness fell, and in sleep he 'was not, for God took him.'"

Anticipated as it had been, the shock of his departure was profound throughout the State. Governor Elias Carr telegraphed:

"The people of the entire State mourn with you the great loss sustained in the death of her honored, patriotic and beloved Ex-Governor."

The Council offered the State plat in Oakwood, and requested his burial there.

But he had selected his last resting-place among his kindred, as he had chosen friends to bear him to the tomb. From remote sections came an unparalleled gathering of the most eminent in Carolina, in every walk of life. Serene and peaceful was his

look, as he lay among the most exquisite floral tributes from far and near, that nature and art could combine.

For two miles the procession wound its way. Who that was there can ever forget the faces of that vast throng? Not one but felt that a friend was taken away. All the factories of Alamanace were closed and their bells tolling a people's loss.

The dignity of sorrow rendered the services august in their simplicity. Eight active and twenty honorary pall-bearers bore him to the grave.\*

One classmate (Rev. E. H. Harding) lifted his voice in prayer, and another (Maj. Jas. W. Wilson) placed the first clod of earth upon his coffin. In that hour, the highest and the humblest, even in the pain of parting, bent before the Most High, and thanked God for the good example of His servant, who had kept the faith.

With one voice the press reflected the feeling of the people. The *News and Observer* said :

"The hand that has guided the four thousand that live in Haw River and Graham is stilled ; its work is done, but such works of man live behind him ; glancing up from the green wooded hills of Alamanace, the great brick chimneys will stand as monuments, and the smoke that pours from their throats will go up as incense from a people who remember their employer not as a master, but as a friend."

The *Charlotte Observer* was prompt to declare :

"North Carolina has had few, if any, better Governors than Hon. Thomas M. Holt made it, and yet it is not on his record as legislator and Governor, as honorable to the State and creditable to himself, as it is, that his fame deserves to rest, but in this, that he has added as much or more than any other man, to the State's material welfare. He has created industries, he has given employment to labor, he has

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\*The active pall-bearers were: C. P. Albright, J. S. Cunningham, S. F. Telfair, Benchan Cameron, Benjamin Robinson, T. B. Womack ; and the honorary pall-bearers were: A. B. Andrews, Wm. Boylan, Sr., Elias Carr, R. H. Battle, C. M. Busbee, J. C. Caldwell, C. B. Denson, R. T. Gray, T. D. Hogg, G. G. Latta, James McKee, P. B. Ruffin, J. E. Shepherd, Henry Fries, F. J. Haywood, Thomas S. Kenan, J. C. MacRae, A. M. McPheeters, Sidney Scott, J. W. Wilson.

elevated people who but for him would have occupied lower stations. Advancing himself, he has helped others. He has added to the sum of human happiness, and been a benefactor to his race."

The *Reidsville Review* contained this just and touching tribute :

"Thomas Holt has been a man of the people, and not of the purple. The honors of public station have displayed and emphasized the virtues of his private walk. In every relation of life the native nobility of his character has asserted itself.

"As a gentleman, he was a modern Sir Gaiahad. He was a millionaire in money, but a multi-millionaire in manliness. He was a man of strong, unconventional, elementary common sense. His mental processes were not intricate, but his judgment unerring. The allurements of official ambition could not tempt him, nor the temporary passion of popular clamor move him from following the dictates of duty.

"In the Governor's chair, at the head of one of the greatest industrial interests of the State—in all of the large spheres of business and political activities in which he moved, a strong, central figure, he remained the same simple, sincere man—the wise and candid counsellor, the kind friend, the sympathetic neighbor.

"Of larger build and stronger mold than most of his fellows, wealth could not deafen his ear, deaden his nerves, and destroy the finer sensibilities of humanity, nor could position exalt him above those whom men call 'the plain people.' He retained his love for the people, as he always remained one of the people. 'God rest thee, noble gentleman!'

"Death may cut short your useful, your illustrious career, but your noble example will live as the gentle and gracious memory of a kindlier day."

To note briefly the expressions which came from this and many other States.

The *Greensboro Record* affirmed :

"For forty years he was an influential factor in the State's history, a foremost leader in industrial upbuilding, education and advancement, agricultural improvement, and political reformation."

A writer in the *Atlanta Journal* said :

"Few men in North Carolina could be so missed as Thos. M. Holt. His life was a beautiful example of integrity of purpose and love for the State of his nativity. And the people loved him."

The *Fisherman and Farmer* of the far Northeast, used this language:

"North Carolina mourns the death of one of her most faithful sons, and every citizen of the State feels that he has lost a personal friend.

"Governor Holt was to North Carolina as Lee to the South and Washington to his country."

The *Wilmington Star* declared:

"As a citizen, he was patriotic and devoted; as a son, fond and proud of his mother State; as a business man, broad-gauged and progressive. In every position he served North Carolina well and loyally. She may have produced more brilliant sons, but none have gone from her more deserving of honored remembrance."

The *News and Observer* said:

"The people mourn the death of a patriot and a Christian—there are no terms of higher eulogy. He loved his State as he loved his family, was proud of its achievements, jealous of its good name, and devoted to its every interest. He patterned his life by the precepts of the Gospel. As he grew older, the Bible became more and more to him the word of life. To intimate friends he loved to talk of religious things, and left behind the assurance that 'all is well.'"

Perhaps the most discriminating judgment was pronounced by Edward J. Hale:

"He was not gifted with those brilliant qualities that charm for the moment, but pass away, to leave nothing of good to human kind. But his was the genius to produce great results from a systematized control of his faculties that has probably had no equal in the history of our State.

"This was the source of his peculiar strength, which often surpassed even his friends and intimates, and we repeat the statement made when he retired from office, that North Carolina never had an abler executive, and few who were his equal."

Time forbids to linger longer over this sad, but precious privilege, accorded to one who loved him for half a life time, to portray his matchless life and character. Rather has it seemed meet to record utterances of the gifted pens of others throughout our borders. Bereavement is too recent to trust one's self to personal recollections.

Yet, let us declare to the young who shall follow that this man was the highest type of their race, the noblest example for their imitation. He revered womanhood; he never stooped to vice. With the one hand he was diligent in his calling, with the other he remembered the poor. His coat-of-arms might well be that of Swift's imaginary kingdom, with the figure of the angel lifting the lame to his feet again.

He loved children; his eyes brightened as he spoke of his own, and not a page on this floor but worshipped him. He gave his best to every duty.

Self-control was the central power of his life, and the key of success. And so the man was greater than his offices, Governor though he was; larger than his wealth, extensive as it might be; stronger than his talents, however numerous and useful; immeasurably more than anything he did, it was for himself, for what he was, honest, good and true, that his people loved him.

North Carolina's annals are illumined by great names. Nash, at Germantown, in the smoke of battle, and Murfree, on his bloody path of glory at Stony Point, no less than Pettigrew, upon the heights of Gettysburg, and Whiting amid the shells of Fisher; Blakely Jones, on the deck of the Wasp, and Bagley, in the bay of Cardenas, transmit her traditions from generation to generation, and they will be watchwords for daring and valor forever.

Nor are her civic glories less. As long as she exists, a Macon's undaunted independence, a Murphy's provident forethought, the judgment of Ruffin, celebrated around the world, the learning of Badger, the enterprise of Morehead, the wisdom of Graham, the culture of Gaston, or the eloquence of Vance, will be the jewels of her coronet. Conspicuous among these, too, will be the star, typical of patriotism, that emblazons the fame of Holt, aglow with the fire of pride in his State, and love of her people. Of all that brilliant galaxy, a peculiar splendor, a serene and celestial halo hangs about the name of him who, while revering the past and building monuments to heroic virtue, led the way to the future, with every throb of his great heart and effort of his





unflinching will, and lifted thousands of his countrymen to better things and happier lives.

God bless the memory of the statesman who can make honest firesides happy ! His victories are not shows of a day, but for all time ; his triumphs may not be inscribed in letters of brass, but they are written on the hearts of the people.

Another has said with tender grace :

" It were well that the memory of such a man be kept green. No North Carolinian ever did more for his State, nor did any man ever go to his grave with cleaner hands or a purer heart. Appreciation of his virtues did not end with his death "

No, it did not end with his death, and when the time shall come, as come it will, that North Carolina shall rear the laurel-crowned marble to the memory of Thomas Michael Holt, let her remember the words that the statesman wrote for the unveiling of his gift of Winston's statue, when he no longer had the strength to speak. Surely his own unconscious pen traced his fittest epitaph :

" If I know my own heart, I desire no other earthly lot than to be able to add my mite to the furtherance of the happiness of the people and the glory of North Carolina."





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